



CALL FOR STATE AID EXPERTS

Call addressed to individuals for the establishment of a roster of prospective independent experts for the assessment of the state aid compliance of project proposals submitted to the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme



1. Background

The Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme is established based on Regulation (EU) No. 1303/2013, Regulation (EU) No. 1301/2013 and Regulation (EU) No. 1299/2013. Its Cooperation Programme (CP) has been approved by the European Commission on 16 December 2014¹.

The Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme supports regional cooperation among central European countries: Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia, as well as parts of Germany and Italy. The overall objective of the programme is “cooperating beyond borders in central Europe to make our cities and regions better places to live and work by implementing smart solutions answering to regional challenges in the fields of innovation, low-carbon economy, environment, culture and transport”.

The total programme budget for projects is around 231 million Euros from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

The programme should, hence, play a considerable role in strengthening the development efforts of these countries and their regions, while contributing to an integrated development of the entire programme area by supporting transnational cooperation projects with mutual benefit, tangible outputs and concrete results.

The programme focuses on four thematic priorities:

1. Cooperating on innovation to make CENTRAL EUROPE more competitive
2. Cooperating on low carbon strategies in CENTRAL EUROPE
3. Cooperating on natural and cultural resources for sustainable growth in CENTRAL EUROPE
4. Cooperating on transport to better connect CENTRAL EUROPE

Beneficiaries and target groups include public authorities and related entities, regional development and innovation agencies, enterprises (including SMEs), chambers of commerce and other associations, NGOs, financing institutions, technology transfer institutions, universities and research institutes, energy suppliers and management institutions, environmental facilities, education and training organisations, transport operators and infrastructure providers as well as other institutions which are affected by the thematic priorities concerned.

The programme is managed by a structure comprising institutions at the European, national and regional levels. Main decision-making body is the “Monitoring Committee”, which is composed of representatives of the Member States of the Programme. As Managing Authority (MA), the Department for European Affairs of the City of Vienna is responsible for the operational management of the programme. It is supported by a Joint Secretariat (JS), i.e. an international office that is also located in Vienna, and a network of National Contact Points, that are located in the participating Member States. The programme language is English.

¹ Documents available under www.interreg-central.eu

2. Call for applications for assessment of project proposals

The Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE MA hereby invites applications from individuals to apply as prospective independent experts via the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE "Expert Portal", with a view to establishing a roster of independent experts for the assessment of the state aid compliance of project proposals submitted to the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme in the framework of calls for proposals.

3. Required expertise and profile

Prospective independent experts must have the following qualification profile:

- Have a university degree;
- Have at least 5 years of professional experience, following the award of the university degree, in state aid discipline;
- Have a proven experience in the application of the state aid discipline as well as knowledge of judgments provided by the European Court of Justice. Experience in the application of the state aid discipline in the framework of European Territorial Cooperation programmes would be an advantage;
- Have a good knowledge of EU programmes and in particular of programmes funded within Structural Funds;
- Have excellent analytical and judgment skills;
- Be fluent in speaking, reading and writing in English;
- Be computer literate.

4. Application and selection procedure

Applications may be submitted at any time, however the deadline for participating in the selection of experts for the assessment of project proposals received in the framework of a certain call for proposals is **one month prior to the closure of the call**. Applications submitted after this date will be considered only for the assessment of following calls for project proposals.

Applications can only be submitted via the online expert portal available at the following link:

<https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/Expertportal>

The application will be rejected if the dossier is incomplete, (i.e. non-provision of compulsory information or missing CV) or if the CV is provided in other languages than English and/or using other templates of CV than the European Europass CV format².

The MA/JS will build a roster of experts including only those candidates who meet the criteria set out under section 3. Inclusion in the expert roster does not guarantee the selection and appointment for the assessment of project proposals. The MA/JS will notify the experts about their inclusion in the expert roster.

The roster will be valid for 2 years from the date of publication of the present call for experts. Afterwards experts will be requested to update their application.

² <https://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/en/documents/curriculum-vitae/templates-instructions>

Independent experts will be selected from the expert roster on the basis of expertise, knowledge and skills appropriate to carry out the assessment of the received applications. The MA/JS will apply non-discriminatory selection criteria and will to the possible extent seek a balanced selection of experts in terms of geographical diversity and gender.

The selected experts will be contacted by the MA/JS inquiring about their availability to participate in the assessment of project proposals prior to their actual appointment.

5. Description of the assignment

5.1 Objective

The aim of the assignment is:

- To appraise the state aid relevance of activities to be carried out by undertakings within project proposals submitted in response to an Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE call for proposals;
- To provide recommendations for ensuring the compliance of the concerned project proposals with the state aid discipline.

5.2 Tasks to be accomplished

The tasks to be accomplished by the expert consist in the following:

- Acquaintance of relevant programme documents (e.g. Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Cooperation programme, application package, implementation manual).
- Participation in a briefing meeting with the MA/JS (optional).
- Assessment of the state aid compliance of project proposals, with regard specifically to the following:
 - Analysis of activities carried out within the project - and outputs obtained - by project partners acting as undertakings;
 - Assessment on the occurrence of indirect aid to undertakings involved in the project as target groups.

The assessment of the state aid relevance of proposals is to be performed on the basis of:

- Information included by applicants in the application form;
- Information included in the partner declarations submitted by the applicants together with the application form.

Further specific information that may be needed by the experts for performing the assessment might be requested to the project applicants by the MA/JS in coordination with the expert.

The assessment work carried out by the expert is to be documented through the filling-in of one state aid assessment grid for each assessed project proposal. The expert is expected to complete each section of the aforementioned assessment grid³, providing sufficient information to justify the presence or not of state aid as well as providing recommendations for ensuring the compliance of the concerned project proposal with the state aid discipline.

³ Template of state aid assessment grid is made available by the MA/JS.

6. Independence and confidentiality

To ensure the independence of the assessment to be performed in her/his capacity as “independent expert”, prior to the signature of the contract the selected expert will have to sign a declaration certifying that there is no conflict of interest at the time of contracting and that she/he undertakes to inform the MA/JS if any conflict should arise in the course of the assessment.

A conflict of interest exists if the impartial and objective function of an assessor is compromised for reasons involving family, emotional life or political affinity, economic interest or any other shared interest with the project applicants.

Throughout the assessment process, and for the following five years following the completion of the assignment, the expert must ensure the confidentiality of the information and documents as provided by the MA/JS. This shall be certified by the selected expert by signing an ad-hoc declaration.

7. Use of tools

Selected experts have to use their own tools (laptop/computers).

8. Equal Opportunities

Equal opportunities policy without distinction on the grounds of sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation will be applied.

9. Location and duration

A briefing meeting with the MA/JS might take place in Vienna (Austria) at the JS premises prior to starting the assessment process.

The assessment work will be done remotely by the expert (at the premises of the expert).

The number of project proposals which will be assigned to an expert may vary depending on the number of proposals received and will be agreed between the expert and the MA/JS.

The assessment of the assigned applications will have to be performed and finalised (submission of filled-in assessment grids) according to a time schedule as agreed with the MA/JS.

10. Fee

The expert is entitled to a fee of EUR 300 (VAT excluded) per each project proposal assessed.

In case of attendance to the briefing meeting mentioned under § 5.2, the following applies:

- The expert is entitled to the reimbursement of travel expenses according to the rules applicable to the CENTRAL EUROPE Programme (e.g.: economy flight tickets);
- The expert is entitled to an additional fee of EUR 300 compensating the time spent at the meeting.